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4 October 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

**SUBJECT: Agency Role in Overhead Reconnaissance and
Other Aerial Activities**

**REFERENCE: Memorandum from D/DCI/NIPE to DD/S&T
dated 11 Sept 1968, Subject: Agency and Community
Organizational Survey**

1. This memorandum is for information only.
2. The reference requests the case for continued active participation by CIA in the design, development, utilization, and control of technical collection systems including overhead reconnaissance. This memorandum addresses itself to aircraft reconnaissance and other Agency aerial collection programs.
3. The Agency has demonstrated by performance during the past twelve years the expertise necessary to identify, develop and operate aircraft reconnaissance programs that have proven responsive in support of national intelligence requirements. Currently, the Agency is providing development management of the U-2R weapons system, and has in the past been charged with the leadership role in the development efforts of the high performance reconnaissance platform (A-12). CIA success in providing development leadership in these aircraft reconnaissance systems for the most part is due to its inherent flexibility and unique streamlined method of management. Specialized requirements have allowed the Agency to concentrate on product development without the usual myriad of bureaucratic approval mechanisms.
4. The principal case for continued Agency operation of a covert manned aircraft reconnaissance program is that a program of this nature provides the U. S. Government with another intelligence

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gathering option, that of a quick reacting capability to gather timely intelligence without the charge of military aggression being sustained. It enables the U. S. Government to operate in the espionage arena with the assertion that the operation is truly civilian in character and is operating for the purpose of satisfying U. S. intelligence requirements which by nature are usually not aggressive. It provides both the U. S. Government and the protesting government time and opportunity to negotiate quietly behind the scenes without overtones of military confrontation.

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6. The CIA channel for command and control of covert overflights provides higher authority direct and secure control of operations in sensitive situations. Its direct Headquarters to operating detachment links makes it more responsive to sudden and unexpected changes in plans than is possible in the more rigid military command structure. This channel affords the decision-maker the possibility of eleventh-hour decisions in fast-developing events.

7. Because the focus is on a single capability, technical intelligence collection, the CIA has been able to develop higher performance vehicles and specialized equipments and to operate with fewer numbers than the military. It also has the advantage of the close association and rapport that results from having under one (DD/S&T) roof the capability to develop and operate sophisticated systems, to conduct current vulnerability assessments, and to develop appropriate counter-measures. It is not distracted from optimizing vehicle and equipments for the primary mission.

8. Basic to the case for active future Agency participation in overhead reconnaissance is a reaffirmation of the desirability

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to maintain a covert civilian reconnaissance capability in pre-crisis situations. Until such a determination is made, the Agency cannot make a final judgment, nor can it properly plan long-range overhead reconnaissance programs or improvements.

9. Since the reference also calls for proposals for organizational changes, the following is submitted for consideration. The published mission for OSA is to develop and operate special technical collection programs. It is appropriate to assess the airborne technical collection programs within the Agency to avoid duplication of staffing effort.

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Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Special Activities

cc: DD/OSP

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